

Deciding to wage war is not a decision that is made lightly or for political expediency. It involves the sweat and sacrifice of America's most courageous patriots, our armed forces. When someone joins the military and takes the yoke of freedom upon their shoulders, they deserve the maximum support we can muster. Mr. Chairman, that is why I have come to the well of this House, to make sure they are provided for.

I support President Bush and believe that we should pass this supplemental as soon as possible. There should be no doubt about United States intentions: We stand behind our troops and their mission to bring democracy and freedom to Iraq.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my support for the President's supplemental request for operations in Iraq. Just over one year ago this body voted to authorize the use of military force to confront the grave and growing global threat posed by Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime. We convene one year later having achieved many successes toward that objective, but face new trials worthy of our continued sacrifice to protect the safety and security of the entire global community.

I realize public opinion among Americans is fiercely divided when it comes to Iraq. Criticism is not a bad thing for our country during a time of war as long as it's constructive and does not undermine our ability to defeat the enemy. As it stands, opponents of the war and detractors of President Bush are too easily fortified by a mainstream press quick to underscore bad news and seemingly ambivalent toward the many positive developments occurring each day in Iraq.

Several of my colleagues here in the 108th Congress have shared stories of the remarkable progress they have observed during recent trips to the Middle East. Electrical grids are being restored, public schools are open, the banking system is operating, thousands of reconstruction projects are underway and thousands more have already been completed. Most of all, the Iraqi people are free—and with the elimination of Saddam Hussein's rule—the world has taken a giant step in winning the war on terror.

\$87 Billion dollars is a massive sum. As a conservative, I'm a strong supporter of fiscal responsibility and accountability. But I believe this supplemental is a wise and necessary investment, critical to our continued efforts to secure peace and future prosperity for the Iraqi people.

The President's request covers two major expenses—troop support and reconstruction. \$67 billion alone will be directed to the operational costs of our military forces: providing for essential equipment and provisions necessary for the safety and strength of U.S. troops. What American could shrink back from that commitment?

The remaining 20 billion dollars will undoubtedly be the source of much debate here today. Some believe that American dollars designated for reconstruction should come in the form of a grant. Others argue it should be made as a loan, payable once Iraq rehabilitates its commerce and economy. We should all agree that the United States cannot withdraw from a crippled Iraq and expect a stable government and economy to take hold.

Reconstructing Iraq is a top priority for the Bush administration and should win the appro-

priate support of this Congress. By agreeing to this supplemental, the United States military will have the resources necessary to rebuild infrastructure and restore social order, creating a politically secure and economically sound Iraq. Accomplishing this goal is the most significant factor that will bring our troops home for good.

During his address to a joint session of Congress last July, British Prime Minister Tony Blair concluded with a prophetic statement we should all consider as questions and challenges arise in the aftermath of war in Iraq: "Destiny put us in this place in history, in this moment in time, and the task is ours to do. If our spirit is right and our courage strong, the world will be with us."

I ask my colleagues to join me in acting in support of our President, our armed forces, the good people of Iraq, and the united freedom of all by voting in favor of this supplemental.

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Chairman, could I ask for an accounting of the time before I move that we rise so that we can be ready for tomorrow?

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore (Mr. BASS). The gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) has 53 minutes remaining, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) has 1 hour and 16 minutes remaining.

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. MUSGRAVE) having assumed the chair, Mr. BASS, Chairman pro tempore of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under further debate the subject of a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for defense and the reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, had come to no resolution thereon.

□ 2215

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MUSGRAVE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BOEHLERT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LIPINSKI addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BLUMENAUER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RYAN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TRIBUTE TO ALTAMONTE SPRINGS PATRIOTS BABE RUTH SOFTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FEENEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FEENEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the Altamonte Springs Patriots for winning the Babe Ruth World Series Championship for Age 16 and Under. These twelve young women along with their coaches and parents should be extraordinarily proud.

The Patriots embody teamwork. They attend schools throughout Orange and Seminole counties in Central Florida including Lake Brantley, Lake Mary, Seminole, Orangewood Christian, Central Florida Christian Academy, and RBR Academy. Many have played together since age 10. At age 12, they competed in little league softball and made it to the Florida State Tournament.

On their journey to win the Babe Ruth World Series Championship, the Patriots won 19 of their final 20 games. The team raised \$6,000 to finance their World Series trip to Louisville. In the championship game, Anna-Maria Jordan pitched seven innings, allowing only two runs while Natalie Ruff led the offense with a fourth inning two-run single.

On behalf of the people of the 24th District of Florida, I would like to congratulate the following champions for their outstanding triumph: Lauren Bennett, Jennifer Garaffa, Nicole Hall, Arielle Jenkins, Anna-Maria Jordan,

Gloria Jordan, Alexandra Lofton, Natalie Ruff, Jessie Sadlowsky, Ashley Tabor, Danielle Valentino, and Andrea Wain, Mark Valentino, Manager, Gary Wain, Coach, Mark Ruff, Coach, David Phillips, Coach.

I wish the Altamonte Springs Patriots continued academic and athletic success.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GREEN of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINOJOSA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HOLT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

QUESTIONS REGARDING VESTS FOR THE TROOPS IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about something that has been in the news lately. I first became aware of this problem in May when I received a letter from a young soldier in Baghdad, one of my constituents, a young man who attended West Point, a young man who loves the military and loves being in the Army. He wrote me a letter and he said, Congressman, I am so proud to be in the Army. And then later on in his letter, he said, I'm angry because there are two kinds of protective vests that are being issued over here. One of the vests is capable of stopping fragments. The other vest is capable of stopping bullets. I'm wondering why my men do not have access to the best vests, those that can stop bullets. It is called the Interceptor vest. It is made of Kevlar. It has areas where ceramic inserts can be placed. And these Interceptor vests have been credited with saving nearly 30 lives in Afghanistan. Yet, Madam Speaker, it is almost beyond belief that although we had months to prepare for this conflict, months during which we knew that there was a high probability that we would be going to war, we put our young soldiers into harm's way without protecting them with the best vests, bulletproof vests, available to us.

There is a story that has been reported in the press of how one young soldier was on patrol, and he was shot by the enemy four times, twice in the chest and twice in his arms, and he survived. He survived because, although he did not have one of these Interceptor vests to wear, before he went on patrol one of his buddies took off his vest and gave it to him. It was only because he had this Interceptor vest on that he survived being shot in the chest.

But tonight, as we are here in Washington, DC, and those of us who are Members of this Chamber feel safe and secure within the confines of this House Chamber, there are young Americans who are in Baghdad and Tikrit and other parts of Iraq, some 44,000, we believe, who do not have the Interceptor vest. They have Vietnam-era

flak jackets basically, jackets that are incapable of stopping the bullets. I wrote Secretary Rumsfeld, and I asked him some questions which I think I and the American people deserve to have answered. Why were our soldiers not provided with these vests at the very beginning of this war? We had plenty of time to prepare to have these vests manufactured. Why were they sent into harm's way? How many American soldiers have lost their lives? How many have been terribly wounded and injured because of the insensitivity or incompetence or outright shameful behavior of those who decided that for some reason our soldiers did not need or did not deserve this kind of protection? I think the Secretary should answer that question to this Congress and to the American people. It is just almost beyond belief with all the billions of dollars available to the Pentagon that this most basic protection for our soldiers, the vests, the body armor they wear, would not be given to them. General Meyers said, well, it's not a question of money, it's a question of production. We're trying to get as many of these vests produced as possible. In fact, the Pentagon has even enlisted three additional companies to produce these vests. Well, it is about time.

Back in Ohio we have an old saying, it does no good to close the barn door after the horse has left the barn. Why were these protective devices not available before our soldiers were sent into battle? General Abizaid, testifying before a Senate committee, said he did not have an answer to that question. He said, I cannot answer why we went into conflict with an insufficient supply of these vests.

Somebody ought to take responsibility. The President frequently talks about the need for personal responsibility. Who was responsible at the Pentagon, in our defense establishment, for this gross oversight? I think the Secretary owes the American people an answer, and I hope he responds to my letter in an expeditious and prompt manner.

AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS FOR SENIORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Madam Speaker, I have come to the well of this House many times in the evening and in the day to talk about the high cost of prescription drugs and how much Americans pay for drugs relative to the rest of the industrialized world. I believe it is a crime, and I believe it is shame on us. I always say it is not shame on the pharmaceutical companies, it is shame on us, because the FDA and the Justice Department work for us. I have been regularly vocal and very critical of our FDA and what they have done in terms of, quote, protecting the public health. I have repeatedly said that a drug you